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SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL MEETING - 2014**REPORT OF THE AD HOC SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL WORKING GROUP ON CATCHES OF COD IN DIVISION 3M.****1. Opening**

An *ad hoc* subgroup of Scientific Council met via WebEx on 5 May 2014 to discuss progress to date and determine a plan of action on the issue of estimating catches for use in the Div. 3M cod assessment. The meeting was overseen by the chair of Scientific Council, Don Stansbury (Canada), and involved the chairs for STACREC (Kathy Sosebee, USA) and STACFIS (Brian Healey, Canada), and representatives of Canada and the European Union (Spain). The NAFO Secretariat was represented by the Scientific Council Coordinator, Neil Campbell, who also acted as rapporteur.

2. Review of recommendations

At the Joint FC-SC Working Group on Catch Reporting (3-5 February 2014) it was recommended that, *“due to the requirement for an assessment in 2014, 3M cod will be used by SC as a pilot this spring to try to address lack of estimates for that stock assessment”*.

3. Review of catch data

The meeting opened at 0900h with a presentation on the data availability and quality at the Secretariat in recent years which relates to Div. 3M cod. It was noted that while observer data should be reported on a haul-by-haul basis, compliance with this requirement was poor. Reporting at this level of aggregation became mandatory at the start of 2014, and a preliminary investigation suggests observance of this regulation is promising and this may prove to be a useful source of information in the future. Provision of daily catch reports has been good since shortly after their introduction at the start of 2011. Coupled with VMS data to quantify the amount of effort associated with each report, this may be a good tool to examine catch rates by vessel.

Noting that the aim of this exercise was to provide an alternative source of catch data for recent years available in time for the assessment at the June Scientific Council meeting, participants made a number of suggestions for actions which could be pursued.

It was agreed that although the haul-by-haul observer data may be of value in the future, the level of detail available in the existing observer reports from 2011 – 2013 is not sufficient to be of use at present.

The information available for the VMS and daily catch reporting system was considered promising, although it was noted that the totals of the daily catch reports were approximately equivalent to the totals from STATLANT 21. The possibility of identifying vessels which are targeting cod and examining their average catch rates as a means to identify any anomalous values was proposed.

4. Plan of work

It was agreed that the Secretariat would prepare an anonymous data file of daily fishing effort, total catch and catch of cod within the 600m isobath of Div. 3M, disaggregated by vessel and flag state, along with some vessel capacity information (length overall and engine size) from the fleet register. This would be provided to Scientific Council for further exploration.

5. Other Matters

No other matters were raised.

6. Adoption of Report

It was agreed that the Scientific Council coordinator would compile a report of the meeting and circulate to participants for adoption by correspondence. The issues raised during this meeting would be discussed again at the forthcoming webex meeting on Management Strategies for Div. 3LN Redfish, to raise awareness of the issue with the wider Scientific Council community.

7. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 1030h,

ANNEX 1. PARTICIPANTS

Don Stansbury (SC Chair), Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Joanne Morgan, DFO Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Fernando González-Costas, Instituto Espanol de Oceanografia

Diana González-Troncoso, , Instituto Espanol de Oceanografia

Brian Healey, Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Kathy Sosobee, National Marine Fisheries Service, USA

Neil Campbell, NAFO Secretariat